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LETTER

TO

A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT.

Esto Perpetua.

LONDON,

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1803.

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THE period at which you have embarked in public affairs is truly calamitous. Two years have not yet elapsed since the ending of the most expensive and formidable war recorded in our annals, and already we find ourselves on the brink of another, which bids fair to be neither less expensive nor less formidable. I will not take upon me to decide which of the contending parties has the best cause, and ethics have ever

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had so little share of politics, that it may not by some be deemed material to enquire. It would, however, give me no surprize to find that our antagonists have the most specious argument: for to allege that the retention of Malta is necessary to the security of our possessions, situated in the seas beyond the Cape of Good Hope, is to attempt to justify on very slender grounds an actual breach of treaty; it is neither more nor less, than assuming that the possession of Malta must lead to the possession of Egypt, and that great danger will accrue from the occupation of the latter province by the French, to our dependencies in India. Now it is figuratively, much more than it is absolutely, true, that the keys of Egypt are contained in Malta; and it is certainly much less true, that the British empire in Asia must fall, if the French should at any time regain the footing they have
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lost in Africa. It would be easy to point out a combination more likely to prove fatal to the interests of England in that most important quarter, and it should perhaps be the first care and principal object of the Foreign Department to prevent such a combination, which there is some reason to think was at one time not far from being realized, from springing up at this or any future time.

The most visionary alarmist can hardly figure to himself that an infant colony of modern Gauls, the very existence of which is now at best problematical ; that a scanty population, inhabiting the aërial confines of a desert, and feebly vegetating upon burning sands at Suez and Cosseir, should, within any period to which man can reasonably extend his views, equip an armament adequate to the invasion of India,

by the tedious and perilous navigation of the Red Sea, of which the King's forces may, as it were, hermetically seal the mouth at the dreary Straits of Babelmandel. Had the issue of the late impolitic war been such as to authorise very proud pretensions at the time when Lord Cornwallis was sent to France for the purpose of negotiating the treaty of Amiens, it might have been well to insist on the cession of Malta to the British Crown, as an acquisition calculated to augment its lustre. Under the circumstances which actually did exist, there might perhaps have been wisdom in proposing that the sovereignty of that celebrated fortress should be vested in the Emperor of all the Russias ; by such a disposition the possession of a place important on many accounts, yet not indispensable to England, would have been placed out of the reach of France. I say this, not because it seems to me a thing

thing desirable in itself, that the naval power of Russia in the Mediterranean should acquire consistency, but because it is material that that of France should not ; and it was no doubt an error of policy, as it was a solecism in good sense, to make any account of the guarantee of powers, whose interest in maintaining such guarantee was at best fluctuating and contingent, and who could in no event be compelled to fulfill their engagements.

It is undoubtedly singular that at a time when the influence and preponderance of France extended over the whole of Spain, over the whole of Italy, and was liable to extend over almost the whole of the Levant, when by necessary consequence we were liable, in the event of a rupture with our Gallic neighbours, to be excluded from so many points, it should not
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have been deemed essential by those who framed my Lord Cornwallis's instructions to stipulate that any one port in the Mediterranean should be subject to the government of his Britannic Majesty. We were better without Corsica. The efforts made to keep the hold which we at one time had of that precarious and ineligible possession, sufficiently demonstrated that those who presided over his Majesty's councils in the beginning of the late most inauspicious struggle, were more conversant with words than things, better judges of the tactics of Parliament than of those which belong either to the ocean or the field. To France it is of value: for which reason it cannot certainly be imputed to the Ministry which gave us peace that they had an eye to an island which it could not suit one of the contracting parties to cede, nor the other to accept. The case of Minorca,

norca, however, is widely different from that of Corsica. The goodness of its port, and the composition of its very limited population, together with its vicinity to the coasts of the ci-devant Languedoc and Provence, render it an object of considerable importance to Great Britain. France would probably have consented to the cession of Minorca on the part of Spain, with less reluctance than she would shew in agreeing to any satisfactory arrangement with regard to Malta.

To resume what has been said ; it is no doubt to be lamented that the treaty concluded at Amiens left us without a footing in the Mediterranean. Malta would have been, of all the points contained within the limits of that sea, the most desirable. Minorca would have been preferable to exclusion. Do not, however, misunderstand me so far as
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to suppose that I think the importance of Malta an adequate cause for the renewal of hostilities, unless circumstances which have not yet publicly transpired, shall have given a new complection to our relations with the French Government. Speaking with the deference which is due to higher authorities, I think it amounts to no such thing.

With Gibraltar alone, inadequate as that proud bulwark is, in many respects, we shall not find it impossible to maintain our ascendancy in the Levant ; and whilst our navy remains such as it is, and that of France such as it must be, under the present circumstances, it may safely be predicted, that Bonaparte will have little more than the security which characterises the admirable road-stead of Toulon, to boast with a reference to operations in that quarter.

quarter. If I took up my pen with any feelings of faction about me; if I were the enemy of any man in office, or the partizan of any man who would be in it if he could, I might naturally be led to expatiate much more at length, generally, as well as particularly, on the misfortunes of the last war, and the omissions of the last peace. I might shew how much less reason the country had to complain of those who concluded the latter, than of those who conducted the former. And without designing a false compliment to Mr. Addington, I might contend how much more advantageous, on the whole, it is, that hostilities should recommence even now, than it could have been, that the course of them had never been suspended; problematical as such an opinion may seem to some persons, and extravagant as it may seem to others. But inquiries of this sort are either mere matters

of retrospect or of an importance comparatively trifling. They are more properly subjects of study than subjects of deliberation. They may be said already to belong to the domain of history.

To prove the present contest rashly undertaken, should that appear to be the fact, would not suffice to give us back the blessings of tranquillity. Circumstanced as we now are, we have only to study how we may best act: the sword is instantly about to be drawn, and war with all its horrors is impending. Let it be remembered that the contest which awaits us is of no ordinary kind; that France has added to her population and her strength in a degree which has rendered her far more formidable than she ever was at any former period of her eventful history; that her numerous bands, accustomed to discipline, inured to hardships, and familiarized with danger,

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ger, have all that carelessness of life, and love of enterprise, which may naturally be looked for in men who have nothing to lose, whilst they may reasonably hope to gain ; that they are flushed with the most unprecedented successes ; that the Generals who command them thirst in an equal degree for plunder and for fame ; that the national antipathies of the respective countries were perhaps never wrought up to such a pitch of venomous malevolence as at the present moment. Above all, that the Gauls have not now at their head as heretofore, an inert prince, exempt from undue ambition, alternately actuated by conscience, influenced by a priest, or governed by a woman, but a man of transcendent achievements, of unquestionable genius, and of sinister designs ; who, taking the same advantage of civil commotions in our time, which was taken by Julius Cæsar of the dissensions

into which the factions of Marius, and of Sylla, had thrown the Roman commonwealth, or rather of the lassitude which followed them, hath rendered himself the absolute master of a most warlike people. Let us not forget that this hitherto fortunate and truly astonishing personage, reigns over a population which seems as if it were now composed only of soldiers and of slaves; that he unites the advantages of experience to the activity of youth, and the spirit of a gambler to the science of an enlightened warrior—Lastly, that he is profoundly inimical to England, and not a Corsican, if he be not vindictive.

At a crisis such as I have described, a crisis the dangers of which it behoves us not to dissemble to ourselves, I can have no hesitation in submitting to your better judgment such ideas as occur to me in relation to the perils which surround

round us, with the freedom and unreservedness of one who feels that the exercise of reason is the common privilege of all; that in a free country the humblest individual in the state may proffer to the highest the suggestions of his mind; that he is actuated only by an anxious wish that our properties may be secured, our liberties continue unimpaired, our independence remain undiminished; finally, that we may continue to maintain the rank which the British isles have for so many ages proudly held among the nations of the earth. If ever there was a period in which patriotism ceased to be an empty name, in which it behoved every member of the commonwealth to contribute his mite of action or of thought towards the general good, it is the period at which we have arrived. You may digest at leisure such crude notions of the policy adapted to an occasion
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like the present as I can alone pretend to offer. You may, and no doubt will, correct and amend them. But you may do still more. The station in which you are placed enables you to urge the adoption of such as seem entitled to regard. If these pages should be found to contain no one idea which could be reconciled to practice, or which should seem founded in expediency, they may serve, nevertheless, to excite the ideas of others, and ere they descend,

“*In vicum vendentem thus et odores,*”

may call the attention of some abler man to questions of momentous import.

The conduct of a war which naturally divides itself into two parts, offensive and defensive, both by sea and land, should, as it appears to me, consist, if I may so express myself, of an
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entire whole, or system maturely weighed in the first instance, instead of being, as it too often happens, from the composition of cabinets, the result of fluctuating councils, clashing opinions, and occasional suggestions from a variety of quarters. Never was there a greater scope for the exercise of ability in the combining of naval and military operations than at the present moment. Never was it more necessary that some man of a powerful mind, possessing at once the confidence of the Sovereign, and that of the Nation, capable of acting upon the most enlarged views, and of infusing new life and vigour into every department of the public service, should be appointed to controul the political machine, and watch over the destinies of the empire. Let us not, if we can avoid it, oppose the clumsy patchwork of a feeble ministry, to unity of action, sublimity of thought, and comprehension

sion of design. If unhappily and inauspiciously—if for the misfortune of the country, and the discredit of the age, no man of that description can be found, let us at least flatter ourselves that those who are placed about the throne will, on this great emergency, not hesitate to lay aside the habits of routine, that they will not seek in our former wars precedents for the conduct of this, and that they will elevate their minds to the magnitude of great and awful contemplations. If ought of sacrifice be requisite, let them not fall short of the magnanimity of sacrifice, but let them be themselves the first to hold out the example. Our naval department, as our sheet anchor, should be our first concern. The public have a right to know what is the foundation, if any there be, for the inculpations which have been so insidiously levelled against a minister, who owes his proud
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title to the brilliancy of his services, and his high office to the splendour of his merits. Inculpations, unaccompanied with proof, and apparently proceeding from quarters to which the minister in question might very reasonably look for veneration and support. If at the verge of a rupture with our restless neighbours that noble lord should retire from a situation which may be said rather to derive credit from him, than confer it on him, whether his retreat be owing to the pressure of infirmity, to the licentiousness of undue obloquy, or to the clamour of an host, interested in preventing the correction of abuses, the occurrence will be marked in England with regret, in France with exultation. If the imperiousness of circumstances should make it indispensable that a change so weighty should devolve upon another, let the country have the

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satisfaction of knowing that it remains vested in very able professional hands, and let it not be told that such a man as Lord St. Vincent has retired, to make room for an indolent general officer, a peer trained at an university, or any similar personage, who may be yet to learn the direction of currents, and the course of tradewinds or monsoons. The dextrous management of this department will not alone command success, but it must be remembered, that without it no success can be expected to attend our efforts. Such is the present reduced state of the French marine, that a comparatively small proportion of His Majesty's ships may suffice to give security to both our East and West India possessions. But it must suggest itself to the most unreflecting mind, that there never was a time in which so many vessels will be wanting to the
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adequate protection of the coasts of Great Britain ; and those of Ireland more particularly still.

In addition to these two important objects, the maintenance of our colonial possessions, and the guarding of our menaced coasts, there is obviously a third to which great consideration must be paid. It is necessary that there should be a large disposable naval force appropriated to the services of foreign expeditions and the furtherance of military operations upon an extensive scale. It is necessary that we should convince our enemy he has to do not with a dismayed, but an undaunted people, that he makes war upon a nation which can attack with audacity, as well as defend itself with vigilance. I do not mean that we should aim at the recovery of those numerous possessions, which, being con-

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quered in the course of the last war, were ceded at its close ; still less do I mean that we should combat against pestilence at St. Domingo. That miserable, although fertile colony, can be compared to nothing more aptly than to the box of Pandora. Let its wretched inhabitants, when the present contest shall have subsided, sink into that state of exhaustion and uncertain repose, which, in the moral, as in the physical world, is consequent on overstrained exertion.

Our Windward Islands have not much to fear ; and it may not be amiss that the Jamaica planters, otherwise done justice to, should be compelled to feel that they must seek an additional buttress in the virtues of humanity. We have in the West Indies all we can be truly said to want. Trinidad is a mine which has as yet been feebly worked ; with Eng-
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lish capital, and English industry, its produce will be rapidly augmenting, and the circumstances of the times will probably give us a sort of indirect monopoly of the commodities furnished by those baneful regions. We should look not to islands, but to continents ; we should create in America a barrier against France ; we should oppose monarchies in the new world to nominal republics in the old, and prove to the First Consul, that, if he cannot be restrained from trampling on the south of Europe, Great Britain cannot be prevented from giving the law to more considerable portions of the globe.—France, invulnerable in herself, excepting from herself, may be vulnerable in her much to be commiserated dependants and allies. They may, indeed, adhere to France reluctantly, but our position is such as does not permit us to respect their weakness ; we must not be
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the dupes of mercenary or insidious neutrality ; it will, on the contrary, behove us to proceed with vigour, lopping off from kingdoms in decay the living branches of dominion, and abandoning, as past recovery, the sapless trunk, no longer able to sustain them. Will any one deny that a diadem, fashioned in the Brasils for instance, would dwell as gracefully on the brows of a British Prince, as the ducal coronet of Tuscany on those of an heir of Parma, in the guise of a crown. The younger branches of our royal family might carry with them, to the fairest portions of the southern hemisphere, the blessings of the English laws, together with the hereditary virtues of that illustrious house of which they are the offspring. If the conjuncture were handled with the liberality which belongs to wisdom, they might be hailed, not as conquerors, but as benefactors and deliverers. The British nation might triumphantly

triumphantly confide to them the glorious task of extending civilization, and opening new sources of commercial intercourse ; it might be theirs to ingraft industry on sloth, activity on abjectness, knowledge upon ignorance, prosperity upon oppression. It is necessary that one revolution should be counteracted by another ; a revolution proceeding upon bad principles, by a revolution proceeding upon good—Let us then produce revolution where revolution will be salutary, but let us carefully banish the mania of it from our own doors.

It is not for me to point out the several projects and the various combinations which reflection would suggest, and which might naturally be expected to arise out of such a view of such a subject. Neither will you expect from me any detail respecting operations, whether naval or military,
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which would require to be framed with as minute investigation of the subject, with an examination of the most recent intelligence, with that degree of secrecy which prudence obviously demand, and in the silence of the cabinet. Suffice it to say, that we should labour to connect ourselves by all the bonds of amity with the United States of America. It is to the fear of such an union alone that we must attribute the new-born reasonableness of France, if indeed there be any truth in the rumour of the recent cession of Louisiana. Mr. Jefferson, whatever may have been, from a variety of causes, the original bias of his mind, is too enlightened, and too experienced a statesman, not to have discovered that the interest of the British empire and those of the country over which he presides are very nearly allied.

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In order, however, that we may carry on an offensive war with a vigour proportioned to the exigency of the occasion, and the greatness of the object we may have in view, it is necessary that we should previously neglect none of those steps which, by enabling us to parry the blows of a most enterprising enemy, may be regarded as essential to our security at home. In the course of your progress through life, you cannot fail to have observed, that generally received opinion is often no more regulated by truth than conduct by opinion. Maxims the most palpably absurd and dangerous derive not unfrequently a sanction from usage.

It was for a long time thought, and probably is thought by many persons at this moment, that the navy of Great Britain was adequate to the preven-

tion of a descent upon her coasts. Yet if any man, ever so little conversant with the action of winds and tides, on floating bodies, considers how many leagues upon the one hand are absorbed in the circumference of these islands, and upon the other hand how many points there are comprized between the Texel and Ferrol, from whence the attempt of invasion may be made, he cannot but be sensible that were we to appropriate the whole of our maritime establishment to the protection of our own shores, we might fail in the attainment of the end. In services of this nature, and required to be performed in these latitudes, accident suffices to defeat the wisest combinations, and render unavailing the most meritorious vigilance. Even the blockade of Brest, generally speaking, practicable, and rendered by the dint of habit familiar to our seamen, is not practicable

cable at all times and under all circumstances. If we are not to be convinced by theory, which plainly demonstrates the practicability of effecting the debarkation of troops, all precaution notwithstanding, let us yield to the authority of practice. The experience of the last ten years may surely satisfy us that we must not place our sole reliance upon wooden walls. Within that period we have seen ten or twelve hundred men, who might as well have been so many thousands, wantonly thrown upon the coast of Wales towards the entrance of the Bristol Channel. We have seen the same thing done where it is much more easy to be effected, viz. upon the north-west coast of Ireland, off which a greater or a lesser squadron, to be relieved from time to time, should constantly be cruizing. The same slant of wind which brought six ships of the

line, carrying the army of Hoche to Bantry Bay, might have brought sixteen or sixty, if France had so many to dispatch. These are facts which we should weigh attentively, and which should lead us to conclude that more of exertion is requisite for our defence than has been heretofore deemed wanting. It is clear that if a number of squadrons, however composed, be detached at the same time from a given number of points, the probabilities are, that some one or more of those squadrons will reach the point of destination, whatever may be the fate of the remainder. It is clear also that this is the mode of warfare most likely to be resorted to by the enemy : with a feeble marine, and with a slender credit, they can expect to achieve but little in the distant quarters of the globe. The hope of plunder, the necessity of bringing the contest to a speedy issue, and above all, the de-

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sire of dominion, will naturally induce the First Consul to turn his whole thoughts towards the conquest of Ireland, or the invasion of Great Britain, and to undertake an expedition, the success of which would place him at the highest pinnacle of human greatness. If the foregoing reasoning be well founded, there naturally arises a question which cannot be too deeply considered, viz. What, in the existing state of things, is the best system of internal defence which can be accommodated to the present circumstances of Great Britain and Ireland, and how far is the same system applicable to both?

The best security of any state which is menaced with the many miseries attendant on invasion, is that which arises from the attachment which the inhabitants of that state bear to the government under which they live; and
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it is no more than reasonable to suppose, that this attachment will be proportioned to the lenity, wisdom, moderation, and impartiality of their rulers. The consideration of which very important truth naturally leads me to reflect on that short-sighted and ill imagined policy, which, through some strange fatality, has ever actuated the councils of England with a reference to the affairs of Ireland; a policy which every wise man cannot choose but reprobate, which every good man cannot choose but deplore. The natives of that branch of the empire may be said to have occupied a middle space between the negroes of the sugar islands and the subjects of Great Britain. Whoever gives himself the pains of reviewing their melancholy history, written as it is in characters of blood; of ascertaining what has been their condition at the different periods subsequent

quent to the reign of King Henry II. and how much of that condition remained unaltered even within the memory of man, will hardly impute extravagance to the assertion. Whatever a spirit of religion and political bigotry which miserably pervades the whole of that ill-fated island, may make some men actually believe, and a much greater number affect to believe, it is a fact that the difficult, yet indisputable growth, I should rather have said the incipient prosperity of Ireland, has been commensurate with the relaxation of the penal laws : in other words, it has been commensurate with the approaches, made by its government towards a system of impartial administration. On the continuance and the gradual extension of that system, depended the good will of the great mass of the Irish population. Conversant as you are with the affairs of the empire, the interests
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of your country, and the events of your own time more particularly, I need not remind you how sudden and how violent a check that system received during the ministry of Mr. Pitt. The memorable recall of Lord Fitzwilliam, the fury of the late Lord Clare, the incredible administration of Lord Camden, coercion, free-quarters, torture, and rebellion, succeeded to each other with a rapidity which could seem astonishing only to those who are incapable of comprehending the relation which subsists between causes and effects. At length my Lord Cornwallis was allowed to shed his poppies over a devoted land. His generous mind felt itself revolted at the barbarous ferocity he found, and so far forth his feelings were such as became a soldier and a man. As an Irishman he could not be supposed to feel. Whilst he sheathed the sword, he was commissioned to

to accomplish the long wished for union, became more practicable by the distractions of the times, the exhaustion of the country, the vast amount of the armed force, and the plenitude of power uncontrouled. He hesitated not to comply with the instructions of his Sovereign, and manifested all that deference for the Court, and all that disregard for the country, which, in his contemplation of public duty, belonged to the character of a faithful servant of the crown. Seconded by a much younger statesman, deficient neither in address nor firmness, and in whom what was wanting in experience was made up in versatility, he too well succeeded in attainment of his end. A nominal incorporation brought about by the most unconstitutional means, and reluctantly sanctioned by a mercenary Parliament, in opposition to the general sense of their constituents, filled up the measure of the

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the national calamities, adding insult to injury, and degradation to misfortune. I recapitulate these occurrences, merely to remind you how very necessarily, and in what manner it hath come to pass, that Ireland, instead of forming a part of our strength, forms rather a part of our weakness, and that in resisting the common enemy little reliance can be placed on any co-operation to be drawn from the physical strength of a disgusted and an alienated province.

Since, therefore, the elements of resistance must ultimately be sought in the physical strength of the community at large, I hold myself warranted in contending, that the first step towards the defence of Ireland must be an attempt to conciliate the natives of it. The language of the English government to that well-nigh distracted country,

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try, should be such as may be deemed best calculated to excite the confidence, and calm the resentment of a people, light, generous, angry, and inconstant, quick in malevolence, indiscreet in affection, exuberant in zeal. It ought to be said to them, Measures shall forthwith be taken to effect the commutation of tithes, and to ameliorate the condition of the clergy whom you choose to follow. We are indifferent with respect to your religious persuasions. We know not whether your attachment to Catholicism originally proceeded from a sincere belief in transubstantiation, a sense of injury, a spirit of recalcitration, or a desire of revenge. We no longer apprehend your being in league with a Pope or Pretender. From France you can have nothing to expect. You were utterly misinformed when you were told, that Bonaparte was descended from St.

Patrick. As well might you hope to derive the blessings of an ameliorated government from the interference of the Dey of Algiers. If you want evidence of the misery accruing from his friendship, or the ruin attaching to his alliance, we have two millions of witnesses in Switzerland, as many in Holland, nine millions in Spain ; and if so considerable a mass of testimony does not suffice, we will add to their voice that of nine-tenths of the people of Italy. Interrogate the blacks of St. Domingo with respect to the mildness of his sway, and the extent of his good faith. Resist the advances of an insidious enemy, if not for our sakes, for your own ; henceforwards the newly chosen device of your government shall be, justice to the subject, and extermination to the foe.

We must not, however, deceive ourselves

selves so far as to suppose that measures such as these, or even any other measures which it is in human wisdom to devise, can suddenly reclaim the lost affections of a people. There are wounds which never heal ; wrongs which it is not in nature to forget ; injuries so deep, that if they can be at any time forgiven, they can be forgiven only by a future generation. We have in effect squandered the means of conciliation ; and though the evils of impolicy may be partially retrieved, must make up our minds to the melancholy conviction, that one portion of the population will be inimical to our common interests from a feeling of resentment, as another portion of it will be inimical to order from a spirit of licentiousness.

In the event of an invasion, the utmost that can be hoped is, that the
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bulk of the population will remain neutral pending the contest. The task of defending the island may be considered, therefore, as depending, 1st, Upon such a portion of the King's regular forces, as well cavalry as infantry, as it may be found practicable to allot to the vital quarter. 2dly, To such a portion of the militia of Ireland as it may be deemed proper to leave in the country. Of this description of the national forces it may with truth be observed, that there no where exists a finer or more gallant body of men; but it must be remembered, nevertheless, that the privates are very generally Catholics, who are commanded by Protestants; that they may be supposed to share in a greater or lesser degree the feelings of their countrymen, and that it is possible to imagine they would prove more ardent combatants upon a foreign soil than on their own. 3dly,

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It would depend on such a portion of the militia of England as can be spared for this most important and essential service. 4thly, Upon the yeomanry of Ireland, from whom, for a variety of reasons, no very powerful co-operation can be expected in the event of a descent effected by a considerable army. Principally habituated to scour the country in small parties in quest of offenders, they want the *ensemble* which is requisite to military operations, and the inevitable influence of a multitude of causes would render the corps, into which they are divided, particularly prone to dissolve. Under these circumstances the public have a right to expect, that if there be in the British army one general officer more distinguished than another for the extent of his professional ability, and of his personal consideration, his Majesty will be advised to avail himself of the services
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of that man in the quarter of which we have been treating. A charge more trying and momentous cannot be conferred. If Ireland be severed from the empire, farewell to the greatness of England.

Having touched thus briefly on the state of the lesser, it remains for me to say a few words on that of the larger island, which is fortunately very differently circumstanced. I have endeavoured to shew, that, in the present critical emergency, it would be utterly unsafe to confide solely and implicitly in the protection which may be afforded by our navy. That in order to give vigour and effect to any rational system of offensive warfare, it will be unavoidable that a large proportion of the King's regular forces should be employed on active service, and in distant regions : that over and above the great
number

number required for the garrisoning and maintaining our numerous colonial dependencies, an unusually large proportion of those forces will be indispensably necessary to the security of the late Sister Kingdom. That for the most cogent reasons, the services of the English militia will be wanting in the same quarter. That England, nevertheless, owing to the vast extent of coast acquired by, or subject to, the controul of the enemy, owing also to the peculiar character of that enemy, and the peculiar nature of his means, has every reason to believe that her own coasts will, ere long, be menaced with an hostile visit. Is it not reasonable to infer, that with so much to apprehend, we shall be wanting to ourselves if we do not resolve upon resorting to some extraordinary means of defence, calculated to obviate the urgency of an altogether new position.

The manifest loyalty of the people of England, the attachment which they bear to the person of the Sovereign, as well as to the wise laws by which they are governed, administered as they have been in the spirit of clemency and justice, afford to a Prince who is confessedly dear to those who live beneath his sceptre, that best of resources, of which in another part of the empire we so much feel the want. He may confidently appeal to the patriotism and the affection of his subjects. Assailed from a variety of points at once, the attention of the ablest Commander in Chief may be unavoidably misled, and with forces hardly adequate to the occasion, some point of access may be left unguarded. It seems to me, at such a juncture, well worth considering, whether it might not be advisable to suppress the several volunteer associations. In lieu of these, to establish,
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in each county, a central depôt of arms, and to appoint a subordinate officer, selected as a soldier of fortune, with a reference only to his merits, to preside at each. I would propose that this officer should have none other than a temporary rank, and that his authority should be altogether null, excepting in the event of an hostile debarkation being actually effected. In the latter case I would suggest, that he should be invested with ample powers for the moment, and that the cultivators of the soil should be instantly summoned as a levy in mass, to put themselves under his command, for the purpose of immediately destroying the invader by the pressure of numbers. I would farther suggest, that it should be expressly signified and covenanted, that the force thus assembled should in no case be required to overstep the limits of the county to which it belongs, and that

they should be disbanded the instant that the enemy should be without their precincts, when the authority of the General *pro tempore* should cease; that such as distinguished themselves for bravery or for intelligence, should be rewarded, and that their loss of time should be compensated at the public expence. Let the man who dares invade our homes perish at the point of the pitchfork, and let the vengeance of an insulted people be prompt as the lightning of the heavens. I apprehend that a levy in mass established locally, as has been proposed, differs most essentially from a levy in mass, or conscription operating generally, after the manner of the French. One is an offensive, the other a defensive engine: one reconcilable to the interests of the individuals called upon, the other obviously detrimental to those interests: the one repugnant to freedom, the other essential

essential to its preservation. The people assembled under such express conditions, rigidly observed, might no doubt be made to feel that they were fighting for their own immediate interests and properties. The army which invades our insulated soil can be but ill provided with artillery. Great Britain too abounds in inclosures, which would facilitate an enemy's defeat. The sphere of action being comparatively limited, and the nature of the services defined, it would not be necessary that the county commander should possess all the qualities which go to the composition of a great captain; or that he should manifest as much of talent as was displayed by Dumourier in the forest of the Ardennes, or by Moreau in that memorable retreat of which victory was the concomitant. With good will on the part of the people, little more would
be

be wanting to the leader than energy of mind.

Such are in few words the ideas which have occurred to me in relation to a state of affairs which cannot fail of occupying a mind so ardent as yours, and which so deeply interests the whole community. I harbour them without presumption, and submit them with all deference, yet cannot bring myself to think they stand in need of an apology at such a time. I know not how far your notions, or those of others as conversant as you are with the interests of your country, may coincide with mine. I am aware that many, if indeed this letter should be read by many, will accuse me of having sketched too bold an outline, and in particular of having counted too implicitly on the exertions of a loyal nation. I have heard it said,
that

that the inhabitants of England, unaccustomed to war, have been enervated by luxury. I trust it will be found that such reflections are as false as they are libellous. To prove them just, it would be necessary to shew that our fleets and armies are not English. I may, perhaps, have been too sanguine ; but if I have been so, if we cannot be prevailed upon to take up arms in defence of all that is most dear to man, then indeed may we with propriety be told, that we no longer are the people that we were ; then indeed may we patiently hear it said, that we have descended to the rank of a second or a third-rate power. Already it has been insolently proclaimed, that we have no right to interfere in what concerns the continent of Europe. Let us assert that right with firmness, but let us refrain from exercising it with indiscretion. Let us cultivate the amity of Russia : let us observe

observe the conduct of all powers, but let us subsidize none. Let us beware of that labyrinth of contemptible expedients and intrigues, which, during the late war, entailed upon us so much of odium and expence. Finally, let us not forget that in the war which now awaits us, our existence as a nation may be said to be at stake.

May 19, 1803.

THE END.



